

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 IO-10 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

SAM-01 SAB-01 AID-05 /074 W  
----- 113305

R 241518Z SEP 75

FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8380  
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN  
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT  
AMEMBASSY CAIRO  
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS  
AMCONSUL

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 6095

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, IS, LE, SY

SUBJECT: ISRAELI PERCEPTION OF SYRIAN ROLE IN LEBANON

REF: TEL AVIV 6073

BEGIN SUMMARY: DIRECTOR  
OF MFA MIDDLE  
EAST DIVISION SEES SYRIANS ATTEMPTING TO EXPLOIT  
APPARENT LEBANESE DEPENDENCE ON SYRIAN DIPLOMATIC ACTIVITY  
BY SEEKING LEBANESE SUPPORT QWUP -ARAB ISSUES. SHE  
SEES LITTLE CHANCE OF MORE ACTIVE SYRIAN INTERVENTION  
IN LEBANON AT PRESENT, BUT BELIEVES THIS TO BE LONGER-  
TERM SYRIAN GOAL. END SUMMARY.

1. WE PURSUED ISRAELI VIEWS ON LEBANESE SITUATION SEPT  
23 WITH DIRECTOR, MFA MIDDLE EAST DIVISION (VERED). SHE  
PREFACED HER REMARKS BY NOTING THAT MFA FOUND SITUATION  
MUCH HARDER TO FOLLOW SINCE RESUMPTION OF HOSTILITIES IN  
BEIRUT ITSELF. SHE ATTRIBUTED THIS TO THE PARTICIPATION  
OF SO MANY MAJOR AND MINOR MILITIAS, OFTEN WORKING AT  
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CROSS-PURPOSES EVEN WITHIN SAME CONFESSIONAL OR POLITICAL  
GROUPS. RESULT WAS THAT ABILITY TO INFLUENCE COURSE OF  
EVENTS WAS LARGELY IN HANDS OF MILITIA LEADERS AND CLAN  
CHIEFTAINS, WITH LEBANESE GOVERNMENT REDUCED TO ROLE OF

ONLOOKER.

2. ASKED HOW SHE ASSESSES SYRIAN INTERESTS IN LEBANESE SITUATION, VERED SAID THAT SHE SUSPECTS SYRIANS ARE AT PRESENT CONTENT WITH CURRENT SITUATION, IN WHICH SYRIAN OFFICIALS ARE BECOMING MORE IMPORTANT TO LEBANESE STABILITY THAN LEBANESE GOVERNMENT ITSELF. AT SAME TIME, SHE SAW LITTLE CHANCE OF MORE ACTIVE SYRIAN INTERVENTION, JUDGING DAMASCUS TO PREFER PERIODIC LEBANESE DEPENDENCE ON SYRIAN DIPLOMATIC ACTIVITY TO SYRIAN ASSOCIATION WITH FINDING ULTIMATE SOLUTION TO LEBANON'S PROBLEMS.

3. AS SHORT TERM PAYMENT FOR ITS DIPLOMATIC ASSISTANCE, ACCORDING TO VERED, SYRIA HOPES TO RECEIVE LEBANESE SUPPORT ON INTRA-ARAB ISSUES. IN LONGER TERM, SYRIA WOULD LIKE TO SEE LEBANON PLAY A MORE ACTIVE ROLE AS CONFRONTATION STATE, ULTIMATELY LEADING TO THE STATION-

ING OF SYRIAN TROOPS IN SOUTHEAN LEBANON. SHE REPEATED HER PREVIOUS OBSERVATION THAT SUCH MILITARY INTERVENTION WAS PROBABLY NOT IN THE OFFING AT THE PRESENT TIME, BOTH BECAUSE OF LACK OF SYRIAN DESIRE TO GET DIRECTLY INVOLVED WITH FINDING POLITICAL SOLUTION IN LEBANON AND BECAUSE OF CURRENT SYRIAN MILITARY PREOCCUPATION ON "OTHER FRONTS".

4. ADDRESSING RECENT FIGHTING IN TRIPOLI-ZGHARTA AREA, VERED SAID SHE FOUND MOST INTERESTING ASPECT TO BE MANNER IN WHICH BOTH IRAQ-SUPPORTED ALF AND PFLP HELPED BRING SHOOTING TO A STOP WHEN CURTAILMENT OF REFINERY ACTIVITY BEGAN TO AFFECT IRAQI OIL EXPORTS. SHE ADDED THAT SYRIAN-CONTROLLED PLA UNITS, WHICH SHE CLAIMED WERE INTRODUCED INTO TRIPOLI DURING FIGHTING, HAVE NOT YET BEEN WITHDRAWN; SHE SPECULATED THAT, IF THEY ARE LEFT THERE, THIS MAY HAVE MORE TO DO WITH DAMASCUS  
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HAVING FOUND A NEW PRESSURE POINT IN ITS DISPUTE WITH BAGHDAD THAN WITH THE LEBANESE PICTURE PER SE. (VERED VOLUNTEERED THAT IRAQ HAD BEEN FORCED TO BORROW \$750 MILLION IN PAST MONTH OR SO, MAINLY FROM SAUDI AND EUROPEAN SOURCES.)

5. COMMENT: VERED'S REMARKS ARE PROBABLY A FAIRLY ACCURATE REFLECTION OF THINKING WITHIN GOVERNMENT ON SYRIAN ROLE IN LEBANON. WE WERE STRUCK BY RELATIVELY MUTED TONE OF HER REMARKS COMPARED TO MANY OCCASIONS IN PAST, WHEN SHE HAS BEEN QUICK TO RESORT TO GREATER SYRIA THEORY TO EXPLAIN SYRIAN ACTIONS. THIS TIME IT WAS NEVER MENTIONED. WE OF COURSE HAVE NO WAY OF

VERIFYING INFORMATION IN PARA 5 ABOVE, BUT PASS  
IT ON AS OF POSSIBLE INTEREST.  
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